

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

DECLARATION OF AREA OF SPECIAL SCIENTIFIC INTEREST AT GARRON PLATEAU, COUNTY ANTRIM. ARTICLE 24 OF THE NATURE CONSERVATION AND AMENITY LANDS (NORTHERN IRELAND) ORDER 1985.

The Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland (the Department), having consulted the Council for Nature Conservation and the Countryside and being satisfied that the area delineated and described on the attached map (the area) is of special scientific interest by reason of the flora, fauna, geological and physiographical features and accordingly needs to be specially protected, hereby declares the area to be an area of special scientific interest to be known as the 'Garron Plateau area of special scientific interest'.

The area is of special scientific interest because of its geology and peatland flora and fauna. Geological interest relates to the occurrence of a successional sequence from dark, coarse olivine basalts below, to flow banded finer grained olivine porphyritic basalts above, and by the presence of a picrite-dolerite plug formation at Trosk, which is unique in Ireland. All of these features occur within the Upper Basalt Formation. A five metre thick pillow lava/hyaloclastite deposit is also present.

The Garron is the largest area of intact blanket bog in Northern Ireland. The peatland complex is comprised of a series of raised and flushed peat bog units, and a number of oligotrophic water bodies, all within an enveloping blanket bog peat mantle. The peatland supports an array of associated floral and faunal communities, which include a number of rare and notable plant and animal species, and a diverse upland breeding bird population.

The peatland exhibits a number of notable structural features such as large, well developed hummock and lawn complexes, pool complexes and eroding hagg complexes, in addition to quaking bogs and saddle mires. The general bog vegetation is characterised by Sphagnum mosses, ericoid dwarf-shrubs and sedges, with the composition and abundance of these components dependent on local edaphic conditions. Flat water-logged ground is characterised by the prominence of such species as Cross-leaved Heath Erica tetralix, Bog Asphodel Narthecium ossifragum and Common Cottongrass Eriophorum angustifolium, over a lush Sphagnum moss carpet, while on more freely-draining slopes Heather Calluna vulgaris, Crowberry Empetrum nigrum and Hare's-tail Cottongrass Eriophorum vaginatum are more typical. The occurrence of weak flushing by the movement of water through the bog is indicated by the presence of scattered Purple Moor-grass Molinia caerulea or Bottle Sedge Carex rostrata. When this flushing is concentrated into localised runnels, the vegetation is characterised by small sedge communities, in which species such as Carnation Sedge C. panicea, Yellow-sedge C. viridula, Glaucous Sedge C. flacca and Tawny Sedge C. hostiana are prominent.

The site is rich in rare and notable plants including Narrow-leaved Marsh-orchid Dactylorhiza traunsteineri, Bog Orchid Hammarbya paludosa, Marsh Saxifrage Saxifraga hirculus, Few-flowered Sedge Carex pauciflora, both Bog-sedge C. limosa and Tall Bog-sedge Carex magellanica, Parsley Fern Cryptogramma crispa, Oak Fern Gymnocarpium dryopteris, Beech Fern Phegopteris connectilis, Alpine Clubmoss Diphasiastrum alpinum and the bryophytes Sphagnum imbricatum and S. fuscum.

Several types of upland and base-poor lakes occur on the plateau. The most common lake types are characterised either by the association of Yellow Water-lily Nuphar lutea with White Water-lily Nymphaea alba, or by an association in

which Water Lobelia Lobelia dortmanna is prominent. Loughnatrosk is a mid altitude lake, distinguished by an association of Water Lobelia Lobelia dortmanna growing with the aquatic moss Fontinalis antipyretica and contains the rare Opposite-leaved Pondweed Groenlandia densa. The marginal lake vegetation around most of the lakes tends to be sparse, consisting of a scattered swamp and poor acid fen fringe.

The site is home to a wide variety of insects including the rare ground beetle Bembidion geniculatum, which is recorded for only one other location in Ireland. Notable water beetles include the northern boreal species Hydroporus morio, Stictotarsus griseostriatus, Agabus arcticus and Dytiscus lapponicus. The local aquatic bug Glaenocoris propinqua also occurs at several sites. Other insects of note include the Large Heath Butterfly Coenonympha tullia.

A large breeding population of Red Grouse Lagopus lagopus is found on the plateau, along with a few pairs of Golden Plover Pluvialis apricaria and Dunlin Calidris alpina, while Common Sandpiper Actitis hypoleucos are a frequent summer resident. The plateau also provides a good hunting ground for Merlin Falco columbarius, Peregrine Falcon Falco peregrinus and to a lesser degree Buzzard Buteo buteo and Hen Harrier Circus cyaneus, while Ravens Corvus corax are frequently found scavenging on carrion.

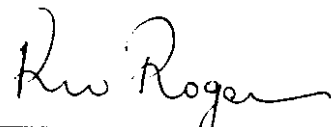
SCHEDULE

The following operations and activities appear to the Department to be likely to damage the flora, fauna, geological and physiographical features of the area:-

1. Cultivation, including ploughing, rotovating or re-seeding.
2. Increase in grazing intensity or change either in the type of livestock used or in feeding practices.
3. Introduction of mowing or other methods of cutting vegetation.
4. Application of manure, slurry, fertiliser or lime.
5. Application of pesticides, herbicides, fungicides or other chemicals deployed to kill, selectively or non-selectively, any form of animal, plant or other living organism.
6. Dumping, spreading or discharge of any matter.
7. Burning.
8. The release into the area of any wild, feral or domestic animal, plant or seed. "Animal" includes any mammal, reptile, amphibian, bird, fish or invertebrate, but excludes livestock and animals used in controlling livestock.
9. The destruction, displacement, removal or cutting of any plant, seed or plant remains, or the disturbance, killing or removal of any wild animal in a manner likely to affect the continued existence of the species within the area except as provided for under the terms of the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985.
10. The introduction of tree or woodland management, including afforestation or planting.
11. Drainage, including peat drainage or the use of mole, tile, tunnel or other artificial drains.

12. Modification of the structure of water courses, including their banks and beds as by realignment, regrading or dredging.
13. Management of aquatic and bank vegetation.
14. The alteration of water levels or water tables or the utilisation of water including storage or extraction, but excluding water used for domestic requirements.
15. Infilling of ditches, drains, ponds, pools, marshes or lakes.
16. Reclamation of land from bog, marsh, river or lake.
17. Extraction of minerals including peat, sand, gravel, topsoil or subsoil.
18. Construction, removal or destruction of roads, tracks, walls, fences, hardstandings, banks, ditches and other earth works or the laying or removal of pipelines or cables, above or below ground.
19. Storage of materials.
20. Use of craft or vehicles likely to damage the vegetation.
21. Erection of permanent or temporary structures or the undertaking of building, engineering or other operations, including drilling.
22. Recreational, educational or research activities likely to damage the vegetation.
23. Changes in game management.

Sealed with the Official Seal of the
Department of the Environment for
Northern Ireland on 31 May, 1994



R W ROGERS
ASSISTANT SECRETARY

Sharon McMillan
Civil Servant
Both of Clarence Court, Belfast

FOOTNOTES

- (a) Please note the consent by the Department to any of the above operations or activities does not constitute planning permission. Where required, planning permission must be applied for in the usual manner to the Department under Part IV of the Planning (NI) Order 1991. Operations or activities covered by planning permission are not normally covered in the list of Notifiable Operations.
- (b) Also note that many of the operations and activities listed above are capable of being carried out either on a large scale or in a very small way. While it is impossible to define exactly what is large and what is small, the Department would intend to approach each case in a common sense and practical way. It is very unlikely that small scale operations would give rise for concern and if this was the case the Department would give consent, particularly if there is a long history of the operation being undertaken in that precise location.